COSEWIC Annual Report

presented to

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change

and

The Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council (CESCC)

from

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC)

2020-2021

COSEWIC

Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada



COSEPAC

Comité sur la situation des espèces en péril au Canada

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ITEM I - COSEWIC ACTIVITIES

1. Wildlife Species Assessment Meetings

Section 15 (1) of the *Species at Risk Act* states: "The functions of COSEWIC are to (a) assess the status of each wildlife species considered by COSEWIC to be at risk and, as part of the assessment, identify existing and potential threats to the species and

- (i) classify the species as extinct, extirpated, endangered, threatened, or of special concern,
- (ii) indicate that COSEWIC does not have sufficient information to classify the species, or
- (iii) indicate that the species is not currently at risk".

Under Canada's *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), the foremost function of COSEWIC is to "assess the status of each wildlife species considered by COSEWIC to be at risk and, as part of the assessment, identify existing and potential threats to the wildlife species".

Due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions, COSEWIC was not able to hold its regular face-to-face Wildlife Species Assessment Meetings and instead went virtual.

COSEWIC held two Wildlife Species Assessment Meetings in this reporting year (October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021). One meeting was from November 28 to December 4, 2020 and the other one was from April 26 to May 5, 2021. During this reporting period, COSEWIC assessed the status or reviewed the classification of 66 wildlife species.

The wildlife species assessment results for the 2020-2021 reporting period include the following:

Extinct:	0
Extirpated:	0
Endangered:	19
Threatened:	21
Special Concern:	17
Data Deficient:	5
Not at Risk:	4
Total:	66

Of the 66 wildlife species examined, COSEWIC reviewed the classification of 41 wildlife species that had been assessed previously. The review of classification for 25 of those wildlife species resulted in a confirmation of the same risk status as the previous assessment (see Table 1a).

Table 1a. Confirmation of status for wildlife species previously assessed:

EXTIRPATED	ENDANGERED	THREATENED	SPECIAL CONCERN
	Beluga Whale (Ungava Bay population)	American Water–willow	Band-tailed Pigeon
	Common Five–lined Skink (Carolinian population)	Atlantic Mud-piddock Deerberry	Beluga Whale (Eastern High Arctic – Baffin Bay population)
	Edwards' Beach Moth	Eastern Hog-nosed Snake	Coastal Wood Fern
	Lake Chubsucker	Green-scaled Willow	Coeur d'Alene Salamander
	Red Knot <i>rufa</i> subspecies (Tierra del Fuego / Patagonia wintering	Kentucky Coffee-tree	Common Five-lined Skink (Great Lakes / St. Lawrence population)
	population) Steelhead Trout (Chilcotin	Swift Fox Western Silvery Aster	Northern Brook Lamprey (Great Lakes – Upper St.
	River population)	,	Lawrence populations)
	Steelhead Trout (Thompson River population)		Silver Lamprey (Great Lakes – Upper St. Lawrence populations)
	Vole Ears Lichen		Tope
	White Shark (Atlantic population)		

Data Deficient, Not at Risk, Extinct:

In November 2020, COSEWIC assessed 5 wildlife species as Data Deficient, and 4 wildlife species as Not at Risk.

Four of the Data Deficient designations were newly assessed: Chinook Salmon (South Coast – Georgia Strait, Ocean, Fall population), Chinook Salmon (South Coast – Southern Fjords, Ocean, Fall population), Chinook Salmon (West Vancouver Island, Ocean, Fall (WVI + WQCI) population), and Silver Lamprey (Southern Hudson Bay – James Bay populations).

Classification was reviewed by COSEWIC for one wildlife species previously designated as Endangered by COSEWIC (on Schedule 1 of SARA); COSEWIC assessed the Aweme Borer as Data Deficient.

One of the Not at Risk designations was newly assessed: Chinook Salmon (East Vancouver Island, Ocean, Fall (EVI + SFj) population). Beluga Whale (Western Hudson Bay population, 2004 designation) was previously assessed by COSEWIC as Special Concern (not on any Schedule of SARA); in November 2020 this original unit was split into two populations (James Bay population and Western Hudson Bay population), each receiving a designation of Not at Risk (Table 1b).

Classification was reviewed by COSEWIC for one wildlife species previously designated as Special Concern by COSEWIC (on Schedule 1 of SARA); COSEWIC assessed the Red Knot *islandica* subspecies as Not at Risk.

Special Note: Northern Brook Lamprey, Saskatchewan - Nelson River populations was previously assessed by COSEWIC as Data Deficient (Schedule 3 of SARA). The classification was reviewed in November 2020 and assessed as Endangered.

With the transmission of this report, COSEWIC provides assessments (see Table 1b) of 32 wildlife species newly classified as Extirpated, Endangered, Threatened, and of Special Concern to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to consider whether to recommend to the Governor in Council (GIC) that they be added to Schedule 1 of SARA.

Table 1b. Newly classified wildlife species eligible for an amendment to Schedule 1 of SARA:

-			
EXTIRPATED	ENDANGERED	THREATENED	SPECIAL CONCERN
EXTIRPATED	Beluga Whale (Cumberland Sound population) Black Hills Mountainsnail Chinook Salmon (East Vancouver Island, Ocean, Summer population) Chinook Salmon (Lower Fraser, Ocean, Summer population) Chinook Salmon (Lower Thompson, Stream, Spring population) Chinook Salmon (South Thompson, Stream, Summer 1.3 population) Maleberry Northern Brook Lamprey (Saskatchewan – Nelson River populations) Red Knot <i>rufa</i> subspecies (Southeastern USA / Gulf of Mexico / Caribbean	THREATENED Beluga Whale (Eastern Hudson Bay population) Chinook Salmon (Southern Mainland Boundary Bay, Ocean, Fall population) Chinook Salmon (West Vancouver Island, Ocean, Fall (Nootka & Kyuquot) population) Chinook Salmon (West Vancouver Island, Ocean, Fall (South) population) Davis's Shieldback Leach's Storm—Petrel (Atlantic population) Lesser Yellowlegs Purple Wartyback Red Knot roselaari subspecies Seaside Centipede Lichen	Barn Swallow Canada Warbler Chinook Salmon (East Vancouver Island, Ocean, Fall population) Cobblestone Tiger Beetle Ferruginous Hawk Grappletail Lakeside Daisy Red Knot rufa subspecies (Northeastern South America wintering population) Silver Lamprey (Saskatchewan – Nelson River populations)
	(Southeastern USA / Gulf of Mexico / Caribbean	·	
	wintering population) Ross's Gull	Short–eared Owl Yelloweye Rockfish (Pacific Ocean inside waters population) Yelloweye Rockfish (Pacific Ocean outside waters population)	

Information pertaining to the wildlife species assessed since the last annual report can be found on the SARA Public Registry website at the following address:

https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/species-risk-registry/sar/index/default e.cfm

A copy of the assessment details for these wildlife species, including status assigned, reasons for designation (including uncertainties if applicable), and COSEWIC criteria with alphanumeric codes can be found on the COSEWIC website at the following address:

http://cosewic.ca/index.php/en-ca/assessment-process

Status reports containing information on COSEWIC's status assessments will be available on the SARA Public Registry at the following address:

https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/species-risk-registry/sar/assessment/status_e.cfm

As of April 2021, COSEWIC's assessments include 826 wildlife species in various risk categories, including 369 Endangered, 196 Threatened, 239 Special Concern, and 22 Extirpated (i.e. no longer found in the wild in Canada). In addition, 19 wildlife species have been assessed as Extinct.

As of April 2021, 62 wildlife species have been designated as Data Deficient and 202 have been assessed and assigned Not at Risk status.

2. Important Notes Regarding Status Assessments

Section 27 of SARA states that the Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of the Minister, by order amend the List in accordance with subsections (1.1) and (1.2) by adding a wildlife species, by reclassifying a listed wildlife species or by removing a listed wildlife species, and the Minister may, by order, amend the List in a similar fashion in accordance with subsection (3).

Northern Brook Lamprey, Saskatchewan - Nelson River populations was previously assessed by COSEWIC as Data Deficient (Schedule 3 of SARA). The classification was reviewed in November 2020 and assessed as Endangered. COSEWIC recommends that Northern Brook Lamprey (Saskatchewan – Nelson River population) be removed from Schedule 3 of SARA.

Aweme Borer: This wildlife species was reassessed in November 2020 as Data Deficient. This species had been previously assessed by COSEWIC as Endangered by COSEWIC in April 2006 and is on Schedule 1 of SARA. COSEWIC recommends that Aweme Borer be removed from Schedule 1 of SARA.

Red Knot *islandica* subspecies: This wildlife species was reassessed in November 2020 as Not at Risk. This species had been previously assessed by COSEWIC as Special Concern and is on Schedule 1 of SARA. COSEWIC recommends that Red Knot *islandica* subspecies be removed from Schedule 1 of SARA.

3. Other Wildlife Species Assessment Activities

Emergency Assessments

Section 29 of SARA provides for the listing of a wildlife species based on an imminent threat to the survival of the wildlife species under an emergency basis. Section 30 (1) of SARA states that COSEWIC is to prepare a status report on the wildlife species and, within one year after the making of the order, COSEWIC must, in a report in writing to the Minister, (a) confirm the classification of the species; (b) recommend to the Minister that the species be reclassified; or (c) recommend to the Minister that the species be removed from the List.

No emergency assessments were conducted during the 2020-2021 reporting period.

4. Wildlife Species Assessments returned by the Governor in Council (GIC) to COSEWIC for further information or consideration

Section 27 (1.1) (c) of SARA provides for the Governor in Council to, on the recommendation of the Minister, refer an assessment of the status of a species back to COSEWIC for further information or consideration.

The Striped Bass, St. Lawrence River population (*Morone saxatilis*) was referred back to COSEWIC for further consideration (Canada Gazette, Part II, July 2021). For more information, please consult this link:

https://gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2021/2021-07-07/html/si-tr33-eng.html.

The Rusty Cord-moss (*Entosthodon rubiginosus*) was referred back to COSEWIC for further consideration (Canada Gazette, Part II, September 2021). For more information, please consult this link:

https://gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2021/2021-09-01/html/si-tr58-eng.html

5. Wildlife Species Selected for Status Report Preparation

Section 15.1 (b) of SARA states that one of the functions of COSEWIC is to "determine when wildlife species are to be assessed, with priority given to those more likely to become extinct".

Following COSEWIC's process for prioritizing new wildlife species for assessment, 8 (including putative designatable units) wildlife species from COSEWIC's Species Specialist Subcommittees' candidate lists were chosen by the Committee for status report commissioning in 2021. The following is a list of those prioritized candidate wildlife species:

Taxonomic Group	Common Name / Population name	Scientific Name	
1. Arthropods	Canadian Philaronia	Philaronia canadensis	
2. Arthropods	Leadplant Flower Moth	Schinia luscens	
3. Birds	Bermuda Petrel	Pterodroma cahow	
4. Birds	Marbled Godwit*	Limosa fedoa	
5. Birds	Rufous Hummingbird	Selaphorus rufus	
6. Amphibians	Plains Spadefoot	Spea bombifrons	

^{*} COSEWIC Birds Specialist Subcommittee is in the process of identifying the appropriate designatable units for this species.

6. COSEWIC Subcommittees

Section 18 (1) of SARA requires COSEWIC to establish subcommittees of specialists to assist in the preparation and review of status reports on wildlife species considered to be at risk, including subcommittees specializing in groups of wildlife species and a subcommittee specializing in Aboriginal traditional knowledge.

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Subcommittee

COSEWIC's Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Subcommittee is responsible for ensuring that Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) is appropriately integrated in COSEWIC's assessment process. The Subcommittee consists of members appointed by the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change. The Co-chairs of the ATK Subcommittee are members of COSEWIC and provide COSEWIC with their expertise on ATK.

The following is a summary of activities over this past year:

- ATK Source Reports were completed for White Sturgeon (4 designatable units) and Striped Bass (3 designatable units)
- ATK Gathering Report was completed on Steelhead (all other designatable units not yet assessed by COSEWIC)
- ATK Methodology Report was completed on Pacific Salmon to identify salmon considered at risk from an Aboriginal perspective.
- The ATK Subcommittee identified a network of Knowledge Holders to assist with species of concern in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The Subcommittee plans to expand on this network to include all of Canada.
- The ATK Subcommittee completed a planning framework for the documentation and reporting of threats by ATK sources for use in COSEWIC species assessment.

COSEWIC extends its sincere gratitude to the members of the ATK Subcommittee for their ongoing commitment to ensuring that COSEWIC assessments are informed by the best available information.

Species Specialist Subcommittees

COSEWIC's Species Specialists Subcommittees (SSCs) provide taxonomic expertise to the Committee. Each SSC is led by two Co-chairs, and typically 10-12 members who are recognized Canadian experts in the taxonomic group in question, demonstrate high standards of education, experience, and expertise and have a demonstrated knowledge of wildlife conservation. These volunteer members are drawn from universities, provincial wildlife agencies, museums, Conservation Data Centres, and other sources of expertise on Canadian wildlife species. They support the Co-chairs in developing candidate lists of wildlife species to be considered for assessment, commissioning status reports for priority wildlife species, reviewing reports for scientific accuracy and completeness, and proposing to COSEWIC a status for each wildlife species. Currently, COSEWIC has 10 SSCs: Amphibians and Reptiles, Arthropods, Birds, Freshwater Fishes, Marine Fishes, Marine Mammals, Molluscs, Mosses and Lichens, Terrestrial Mammals, and Vascular Plants.

For more information please see:

http://cosewic.ca/index.php/en-ca/about-us/cosewic-subcommittees

SSC meetings typically take place annually in different locations in Canada or by videoconference. Observers are invited to attend meetings, and public information sessions may also take place.

In addition to their continued work to ensure that high quality status reports are brought to each COSEWIC Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting, SSCs also periodically undertake special projects aimed at assisting their work.

The Vascular Plants SSC undertook a Special Contract reviewing information for candidate species in 2020. This work was to update the information on vascular plants species that have not yet been assessed by COSEWIC and help to identify the highest priority species for COSEWIC assessment.

The Marine Fishes SSC continued work on designatable unit reports for widely-distributed, anadromous salmonid species. These reports will help the SSC and COSEWIC to decide on further priorities for assessment. The SSC also initiated a project to develop an enhanced method to interpret population declines from long-term trend data. This effort is also of interest to other SSCs using long-term data, such as birds.

The Molluscs SSC continued to maintain an annotated bibliography of references on threats to mollusc species. This assists the SSC with bringing the best available information to threats assessment processes.

COSEWIC is extremely grateful for the important work of the SSC members who provide their time and expertise on a volunteer basis.

7. COSEWIC Operations and Procedures

Section 19 of SARA states that COSEWIC "may make rules respecting the holding of meetings and the general conduct of its activities."

COSEWIC is guided in its activities by an Operations & Procedures (O & P) Manual that is reviewed annually by COSEWIC's O & P Subcommittee, which recommends any changes to the Committee for its approval. During this reporting period, the COSEWIC O & P Manual was updated to reflect some minor changes in COSEWIC's procedures. The most notable changes are as follows:

- As part of an initiative begun in 2018 to increase the diversity of the COSEWIC membership, COSEWIC updated their call for memberships (Co-chairs and SSC members).
- COSEWIC also added two new Early Career membership positions to the committee, as another means of increasing diversity. This led to changes to the number of votes required for quorum and a successful motion or species assessment vote.
- COSEWIC also added one new Early Career membership position to each of the 10 Species Specialist Subcommittees

 Some contact clarifications were added for status report writers requiring information from the Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Subcommittee and the Remuneration Guidelines for Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) Subcommittee Members and ATK Subcommittee Co-chairs was approved by ECCC and updated.

8. Procedural Working Groups

Section 18 (1) of SARA also allows COSEWIC to establish subcommittees to advise it or to exercise or perform any of its functions.

Procedural working groups are essential to ensuring COSEWIC's operations and procedures are efficient, effective and followed clearly, thus maintaining the quality and consistency of COSEWIC status assessments and processes.

a) Press Release

This Working Group was active before and during the Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting on the production of each press release.

b) Species Prioritization

The Priority Setting Working Group met in March of 2021 to rank candidate species for COSEWIC assessment. Nine species were designated high priority for COSEWIC assessment and advertising on the fall 2022 Call for Bids for status report commissioning. The working group also met in June of 2021 to discuss SARA minimum requirements, streamlined processes for reassessment and the ranking of reassessments. This work is aimed at finding solutions to COSEWIC's growing list of backlogged reassessments while ensuring that COSEWIC targets highest priority species for assessment.

c) Status Report Streamlining

COSEWIC recognizes that its status report style and format could benefit from review and refinement to make reports more concise and consistent and better meet users' needs, including those involved in Recovery. Continuing with a process that began last year, refinements to report formats and instructions to report writers will be proposed to the wider COSEWIC membership at upcoming Wildlife Species Assessment Meetings.

d) Designatable Units

Designatable units are COSEWIC's fundamental assessment unit corresponding with Wildlife Species. They are determined using scientific evidence for discreteness and significance. COSEWIC members updated the standard guideline for determining designatable units, leading to a more streamlined approach that will enhance consistency of the determination of designatable units.

e) <u>Data</u>

This working group is still reviewing Appendix F8 (Updated Guidelines Concerning Sensitive Information) of the Operations and Procedures Manual. They are also developing tools for data sharing agreements with third parties to improve COSEWIC's data-sharing relationships with conservation partners and data owners.

f) Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

This newly formed working group is working towards its mandate of achieving diversified membership that is representative of the population they serve. An EDI consultant has been hired to facilitate this goal. The contract includes surveying membership, analyzing recruitment documents, identifying barriers, and providing training. The consultant will work closely with the working group over the entire process, with a final report and recommendations being provided to the committee in October 2022. Prior to hiring the consultant, COSEWIC made two changes to its membership to enhance diversification. Feedback on these changes has been very positive.

- Two new Early Career membership positions were added to the committee
- One new Early Career membership position was added to each of the 10 Species Specialist Subcommittees

g) Wildlife Management Board Process

Work is ongoing to improve communication with Wildlife Management Boards. Plans for any in person meetings with WMBs this past fiscal were placed on hold due to COVID-19 travel related restrictions.

h) Criteria

In spring 2021 this working group proposed minor revisions to COSEWIC quantitative criteria for status assessment, to align with recent updates to IUCN criteria. Proposals were voted and accepted by COSEWIC. Training on criteria was delivered to new COSEWIC and SSC members in spring 2021.

i) Threats Assessments

A new working group was established to enhance the consistency with which COSEWIC assesses threats to species. In addition to improving status assessments, this work is expected to be beneficial for Recovery planning.

9. COSEWIC Communications

Insofar as resources allow, COSEWIC and its Chairs over the years have made every effort to inform governments and the public about the work of the Committee. COVID-19 related travel restrictions prevented the COSEWIC Chair from attending some face to face meetings this past fiscal.

During the current reporting period, COSEWIC released two press releases outlining the results of the fall 2020 and the spring 2021 Wildlife Species Assessment Meetings. The links to the COSEWIC press releases can be found on the COSEWIC website:

http://cosewic.ca/index.php/en-ca/news-and-events

COSEWIC's Twitter account informs Canadians about news on Canadian species at risk. The account can be found at https://twitter.com/cosewic and now has over 1,800 followers.

The Chair of COSEWIC gave the following presentations on the work of COSEWIC:

- Canadian Society of Environmental Biologists (webinar)
- Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC
- BC Chapter of the Wildlife Society (webinar)
- University of British Columbia (two courses)
- Simon Fraser University ecology seminar series
- University of Toronto conservation course
- Presentation to Canadian Wildlife Directors.

In addition, the Chair of COSEWIC had written correspondence or attended meetings regarding the following issues.

- Unsolicited status report in preparation regarding Sun Stars
- Unsolicited status report in preparation regarding Skeena Chinook Salmon
- Joint letter from non-government organizations in Quebec regarding Bittern
- Correspondence with scientists regarding the status of Fin Whales
- Federal ATIP request involving Steelhead

- Meetings with various federal officials regarding Striped Bass
- Meetings with officials from ECCC regarding SARA modernization
- Meeting with people from Recovery regarding SARA modernization, which led to 3 presentations to members of COSEWIC as well as presentations to each of the 10 Species Specialist Subcommittees

In addition, the Chair of COSEWIC participated in the following media interviews regarding the work of COSEWIC:

- Up Here magazine
- Numerous interviews with print media regarding Striped Bass
- Numerous interviews with print media regarding Pacific Salmon

ITEM II - COSEWIC MEMBERSHIP

Section 16 of SARA states that (1) COSEWIC is to be composed of members appointed by the Minister after consultation with the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council and with any experts and expert bodies, such as the Royal Society of Canada, that the Minister considers to have relevant expertise. (2) Each member must have expertise drawn from a discipline such as conservation biology, population dynamics, taxonomy, systematics or genetics or from community knowledge or aboriginal traditional knowledge of the conservation of wildlife species. (3) The members are to be appointed to hold office for renewable terms of not more than four years.

1. Membership Changes

For a current list of members on COSEWIC, please see the COSEWIC website.

http://cosewic.ca/index.php/en-ca/about-us/cosewic-members

Members from the Federal, Provincial or Territorial jurisdictions are recommended to the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change by the jurisdiction.

The Co-chairs of the ATK Subcommittee are elected by the ATK Subcommittee members and recommended to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for appointment to COSEWIC. The Co-chairs and all ATK Subcommittee members are nominated by National Aboriginal Organizations with the exception of two of its members who can be nominated by the ATK Subcommittee. Subcommittee members are appointed by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Species Specialist Subcommittee Co-chairs and Non-government Science Members are recommended to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change by COSEWIC following an in-depth review process.

A call for five Species Specialist Subcommittee Co-chairs was posted on the COSEWIC website between January 20 and February 17, 2020. Selection Committees composed of COSEWIC and Species Specialist Subcommittee members then evaluated the applications following procedures set out in COSEWIC's Operations & Procedures Manual. The Chairs of each Selection Committee prepared reports summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of the applicants, which were discussed with COSEWIC during the virtual species assessment meeting on May 4, 2021. Selected candidates were confirmed by COSEWIC and their names and CVs were provided to the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change in June 2021 for consideration of appointment. Members of CESCC were copied on this correspondence.

ITEM III - WILDLIFE SPECIES ASSESSMENTS

In accordance with Section 25(1) of SARA when COSEWIC completes an assessment of the status of a wildlife species, it must provide the Minister and the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council with a copy of the assessment and the reasons for it. A copy of the assessment must also be included on the public registry.

Information pertaining to the wildlife species assessed since the last annual report can be found on the SARA Public Registry website at the following address:

https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/species-risk-registry/sar/index/default e.cfm

The status reports will be available in English and French on the Public Registry at the following address:

https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/species-risk-registry/sar/assessment/status e.cfm

ITEM IV – WILDIFE SPECIES ASSESSED BY COSEWIC SINCE ITS INCEPTION

In accordance with Section 25(2) of SARA, COSEWIC must annually prepare a complete list of every wildlife species it has assessed since the coming into force of that section and a copy of that list must be included in the public registry.

The Canadian Species at Risk publication is available on the Species at Risk Public Registry.

https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/species-risk-registry/search/advSearchResults_e.cfm?stype=doc&lng=e&advkeywords=&docid=33&startdate=&enddate=&#ot33

It includes all wildlife species assessed by COSEWIC since its inception up to and including October 2020.